

Audiovisual Aids and Speaking Tips for Program Presenters

We truly appreciate your willingness to deliver a presentation at the TRB Annual Meeting. The following information is provided to help ensure that your presentation will be a success.

Audiovisual Aids

Presentation software such as PowerPoint can enhance technical presentations. But using all the fancy bells and whistles that come with your software doesn't guarantee success.

- Choose a background and graphics that are consistent with your message, and then use them consistently. Many of the templates available in presentation software programs are not appropriate for business or technical presentations. Using too many different backgrounds is distracting and detracts from your message.
- Match transitions to your subject matter and your audience. Transitions are the effects you create for moving from one slide to the next. Slides can be revealed with a variety of effects such as "flying" text in from any direction, dissolving from one slide to another, or fading out and in. Effects such as dissolving, wiping right, and box in/out are safe to use with a conservative audience. Blinds and checkerboard effects maybe used in less formal situations. Flying graphics in from the top generally creates an upbeat effect but it can be startling as well, so use this option with care.
- If someone else will be advancing your slides, it is recommended that you minimize transitions within the same slide. If you have transitions within the same slide, make sure you know what they are, as these may necessitate multiple "advances" to display all the information.

About the Design of Your Visual Aids

Keep in mind that YOU are your best visual aid. Start with the idea that you don't need visual aids, and then convince yourself that using them will make for a clearer presentation.

The virtue of visuals is that they can demonstrate relationships, emphasize ideas, and clarify structure-more quickly and more clearly than doing without them. If the visuals you're thinking of using meet these criteria, then here are ideas for making sure they work.

1. Make Them Legible

No matter how much time and money you've put into the production of your visual aids, it's wasted if your audience can't read them. If it's important enough to be a visual, it's important enough to be legible. No one in your audience will complain if the lettering is too big; all should if it's too small. You should never have to say "I know you can't see this, but" Please respect your audience by using quality visual aids or they may leave your presentation.

To ensure that your visual aids will be legible:

- Use 24-point type for lettering done in ALL CAPITALS and 32-point for lettering in Capitals and Lowercase
- Use a sans serif typeface such as Helvetica, Arial, or Universal.

2. Keep Them Simple

Visual aids used in a presentation must be twice as simple and four times as bold as those used in a written report. Be brutal with details:

- Round off numbers; cut decimal places.
- Use a scale along either the horizontal or vertical axis of a graph, bar chart, or column chart instead of numbers at the ends of the bars or columns.
- Substitute symbols for words-\$ is better than "dollars"; % is better than "percent."
- Abbreviate where possible without creating confusion.
- Delete footnotes; introduce the information as part of what you say if it's important enough to mention.
- Omit sources; leave them for the written paper.
- Omit lines that detract: avoid underlines, excessive grid rulings, unnecessary outlines, and company logos.

Keep Title to One Line

- Use 6 to 7 lines per slide (maximum)
- Edit long sentences to only one line
- Use 6 to 8 words per line (maximum)
 - Use only one sublevel
- **Boldface text carries more weight**
- Test slides for legibility and contrast

3. Use Text Visuals Sparingly

Avoid using text visuals as cue cards or crutches for what you're going to say. Put that text in the notes you'll refer to as you speak. Use very short text visuals only to structure a complex concept or to emphasize groups of ideas, such as 3 conclusions, 4 recommendations, 5 next steps.

What the speaker should say:

The purpose of this presentation is:

- To share with you the results of our study on highway safety performance through
- Reviewing performance trends of different highway classifications
- Giving you the analysis of the major factors contributing to this performance and
- To outline the steps that are recommended to enhance safety on highway classes needing improved performance

What the slide should show:

Presentation Purpose

- Review performance trends
- Discuss contributing factors
- Recommend improvement steps

4. Don't Crowd Your Slides

Err on the side of more slides with less on each slide. Keep in mind that it takes the same amount of time to speak through six ideas on one slide as it does to speak through one idea on each of six slides. Besides, making your audience look at the same slide while you speak through the six points does not make for visual excitement.

5. Use Color with Purpose, Not as a Decoration

Examples:

- To emphasize a trend line, a component, a row of data, a title;
- To identify a recurring theme throughout the presentation (display related data in the same color);
- To distinguish actual from projected, one trend from another;
- To symbolize the meaning of a word ("losses" in red, "Go" in green);
- Use contrasting colors-dark lettering on a light background is most readable. Avoid pastels and red or green lettering;
- Strong visual contrast is critical – many people have trouble distinguishing between closely related colors (for example, approximately 7 percent of the male population either cannot distinguish red from green, or see red and green differently);
- Too many colors in a single visual will reduce contrast and legibility.

Generally, use no more than four colors in a single visual.

[Visual Aids Information and Equipment Orders](#)

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Speaking Tips

1. Talk to Your Audience, Don't Read Them a Paper

Think of this as a communication with your audience, rather than a presentation to the audience. Spend more time with the audience than with your paper: make eye contact with people around the room. Speak clearly and avoid monotone.

Let your confidence, conviction, and enthusiasm show.

2. Be Natural, Not Perfect

Don't be afraid to make mistakes, to say the wrong thing at the wrong time, to forget an important point, or to have no answer for a question. Mistakes are unavoidable; suffering is optional. Better to be your comfortable best self than try to be perfect.

3. Rehearse, Rehearse, Rehearse

Rehearse before the presentation—during it is too late. **Time your presentation to keep within your allotted time!** Help the presiding officer, yourself, and your audience by sticking to your allotted speaking time (generally 20 minutes-15 for presentation, 5 for questions).

4. Encourage Questions

Be glad your audience is asking questions; it shows they're paying attention.

- Be patient and listen to the question without stepping on the questioner's words.
- Pause before responding; don't rush your answer. Make the questioner feel that the question was important enough for you to think about an answer.
- Repeat the question into the microphone so that everyone in the room knows what it is.
- Answer only the question that's been asked—no more and no less.
- Make eye contact with others in the room, not only the person who asked the question.

5. Seek Feedback

Ask for feedback on your visual aids and presentation style from the session moderator, committee members, audiovisual technician, or TRB staff.

6. Humor

Humor can be an effective tool for establishing rapport with your audience or making a point. Humor can do more harm than good, however, if it offends or denigrates others. Any joke you tell should be in good taste and appropriate for the topic. Your presentation should be remembered for the information it conveys, rather than for the jokes it contains.